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From Ford to the Olympics

The development of an emblematic ski resort - Sestriere

Egidio Dansero et Matteo Puttilli

Ski resorts and the crisis

- 1 The crisis of the traditional ski resort is now widely recognized: a crisis that was warned of in the '90s (Knafo, 1991; CIPRA, 1998) and came to a head in more recent years (Tuppen, 2000; Macchiavelli, 2009). The resort that relied almost entirely on winter sports has shown just how vulnerable it is to a multitude of factors (Koenig, Abegg, 1997; Elsasser, Burki, 2002): a shrinking market, international competition and the rise of new tourist destinations, changes in the popularity of different sports, territorial and environmental impacts and the pressures exerted by the weather, either in the short term – seasons of abundant snowfall, seasons of drought – or more lastingly, in the form of climate change and the retreating snow line (Richard, George-Marcelpoil, Boudières, 2010).
- 2 These factors have forced ski resorts to reposition themselves on the tourist markets (Derioz, Bachimon, 2009), fueling a rather notably unharmonious debate about their future (Flagestad, Hope, 2001; Bailly, 2002; Marcelpoil, Boudières, 2006; Arcuset, 2010) that has revolved around several more general issues, three of which concern us here:
 - The management models (Gerbaux, Marcelpoil, 2006), which can be based on participatory forms of governance and involvement of local communities, rather than on more hierarchical approaches centering on the role of the facility operator.
 - The problem of rejuvenating and differentiating tourist attractions, with the accent on eliminating their seasonal dependence and thus appealing to a broader market (Tuppen, 2000; Macchiavelli, 2009).
 - The relationship, often neglected in the literature on Alpine resorts, with the surrounding area of which the resort is a part (Emanuel, 1994).
- 3 Topical as these issues are, the literature dealing with the future of the ski resort seems lacking in empirical examples for the most important sites in the Alps.

- 4 The aim of this paper is thus two-fold: first, to contribute to the debate concerning the future of the ski resort, analyzing the case of Sestriere, whose major significance is belied by the surprisingly scant attention it has received by Italian Alpine researchers (as stated by a recent study upon academic research on western Alps) (Puttilli, 2012). Second, the paper will follow a geographical and territorial approach rooted in the assumption that ski resorts have their own location-specific features organized on the basis of multiple networks of spatial relationships with the surrounding areas that no attempt to predict the future of the resort can afford to ignore.
- 5 The contribution covers the 90 years-long history of Sestriere and it exploits different sources of data and information. Since there is not an organic literature concerning the past of Sestriere, the paper first moves from Batzing's proposal to sub-divide the evolution of Alpine tourism into six phases and then applies this to the specific case of Sestriere alpine station. Concerning the early phases (1934-1955 and 1955-1985), a review of that authors that already mentioned Sestriere in their works and of some gray literature permits to reconstruct the original intentions and motivations that moved the Agnelli's family to build up the sky resort. For the most recent phases (1985-1999 and 1999 – actual period), data concerning the presence of Italian and international tourists and a more established literature concerning Torino's Olympic Games highlight the growing international role of Sestriere and its complex relationship with the surrounding valleys. Finally, for what concerns a qualitative evaluation of the present state of Sestriere and, more important, of its future challenges a series of semi-structured interviews have been submitted to local stakeholders¹ and to researchers at the University of Torino.

An archetypal ski resort

- 6 Perched at an altitude of 2035 meters on the watershed between the Val Chisone to the east and the Val di Susa to the west in the province of Torino, Sestriere (887 inhabitants in 2009) embodies the archetype of the high-altitude integrated tourist resort devoted almost entirely to winter sports tourism. At the time it was founded, it had all the fascination of a visionary project, which gave concrete shape to and foreshadowed the essential features of the ski resort that Guerin and Gumuchian (1977) and Knafo (1978) will describe in detail as regards its form and spatial organization. Sestriere rose where before there was nothing but Alpine huts and pastures, in an area bordering France, with both its Rationalist architecture and function reflecting its Fordist aim: providing room for winter recreation and leisure outside Torino's urban confines. Sestriere was thus born as a *city of the snow*, the natural, upward extension of the industrial city *par excellence*, Torino². At the same time, it was the outcome of an individual project promoted by a prominent business family (the Agnelli, owners of Fiat) and as such sprang from a territorial vision that, in creating the resort, saw the advantages of a successful real estate venture, as well as an expression of its local rootedness. With these unique conditions, Sestriere shows an original and exclusive type of territoriality: its function cannot be other than leisure, and its link cannot be other than with the city it was designed to serve.
- 7 Precisely because of these original characteristics, a particularly significant question today is how Sestriere has dealt with the changes that have impacted Alpine tourism at a

variety of levels. Accordingly, we can reconstruct Sestriere's territoriality with reference to three systems of relationships:

- International relationships (represented principally by supralocal tourist markets and flows), on a level to which Sestriere has always aspired.
- Relationships with the city of Torino, which like the resort has also been affected by major changes in recent decades.
- Relationships at the local level, from those with other Alpine valleys and resorts, to those with neighboring towns and tourist destinations.

- 8 Batzing (2007) has suggested that the development of Alpine tourism can be seen as taking place in six distinct periods: the discovery (1765-1880), the Belle Époque (1880-1914), the transition between the two wars (until 1955), the golden age (1955-1985), the slump (1985-1999) and the current stage of increased territorial competition (2000 to the present day). This approach can be used to interpret the changes that have affected Sestriere in the course of its history as regards the resort's territoriality and anchorage to other territories, places and networks (Table 1).

Table 1. The stages of Sestriere's development in the history of Alpine tourism

Stages of Alpine tourism	Between the two wars and up to 1955	Golden age (1955 – 1985)	The slump (1985 – 1999)	Increased territorial competition (1999 – present)	
Events and trends for Sestriere	- Foundation - Investments in real estate and facilities	- Sestriere's winter functions reinforced and consolidated - Gradual inclusion in World Cup circuits - International investments	- Via Lattea founded: integration at the level of a ski complex - Urban expansion - Sestriere '97 Alpine Skiing World Championships	- Runup to the Torino 2006 Winter Olympics - Major investments in tangible and intangible assets	- Post-Olympic period and management of the Olympic legacy
Relationship with Torino	- Dependence on Fiat and Torino - Specialization in winter sports tourism	- Winter sports tourism becomes a mass phenomenon - Sestriere still depends on Fiat and Torino	- Gradual move away from dependence on Torino	- Interdependence with Torino and subsequent independence (and Fiat withdrawal from Sestriere spa)	- Freedom from the city and rise of a more equal relationship
Relationship with surrounding territories	- Competitive coexistence	- First forms of integration between ski lifts by <i>Sestriere spa</i>	- Foundation of the Via Lattea and functional integration with the other townships in the high valleys	- Interdependence between the Alpine townships hosting the Games	- Integration in planning and development, as well as of infrastructures
Sestriere's international prominence	- Sestriere puts itself on the tourist map and foreshadows the integrated resort model	- Sestriere gains a prominent place on the international tourism map	- The Via Lattea area gains prominence on international tourism markets	- The area is subject to overexposure in the media	- Rethinking tourist attractions and promoting new vocations

Foundation and early years (1934-1955)

- 9 Sestriere's foundation in 1934 was very much a top-down operation, imposed on the area from above: it pursued a single functional criterion (attracting tourism) which brought about a break with the traditional uses of the land by the area's communities, which had long depended on farming, forestry and livestock grazing (Pressenda, 2001). Sestriere, by contrast, needed space for hotels and hospitality facilities; above all, it required cleared hillsides for the ski slopes and other tourism infrastructures. The site was carved out of the lands formerly belonging to other townships, and now tacked onto the outskirts of

the new resort and its tourist facilities. The entire site was part of an overall project conceived by a single decision-making group (the Agnelli family) which for the first time combined skiing and tourist accommodation in the same place, a true innovation away from consolidated canons (De Rossi, 2005), binding it with the destinies of Torino, where the Agnelli family represented industrial power: Sestriere was thus the extension of the city into the mountains, serving its inhabitants' recreational needs in the same way that the automotive industry occupied their working hours. Sestriere's symbolic value was also expressed in the choices made by its architects, who were called upon to design a forward-looking mountain center that proclaimed its modernity through the innovative lines of Rationalist architecture and rejected all links with traditional mountain construction.

- 10 Aside from the city of Torino, Sestriere did not have significant relationships with the long supralocal networks. In the development of mountain tourism, it was part of a scene which was in some respects still *primordial*, when the mountain tourism was thought of more in terms of the Alpine villages and first-generation resorts such as Chamonix, Saint Moritz, etc. whose attractions centered on mountain climbing and spas, rather than ski resorts as such.

Sestriere in the period of mass tourism (1955-1985)

- 11 For Sestriere, the thirty years between 1955 and 1985 was a period of growth and increasing prominence on the winter sports tourism scene, reflecting the spread of the integrated resort model in other Alpine countries as well as in Italy. New ski lifts and runs were opened, road links with both the Val di Susa and the Val Chisone were significantly improved, and international tour operators such as the *Club Méditerranée* invested in the resort, taking over management of Sestriere's two towers (the Torre and Duchi d'Aosta hotels), symbols of the town as well as its most important lodging complexes, providing sleeping accommodation for over 1600 people. Sestriere's growing popularity as a tourist destination also benefited from its inclusion (starting in 1967, but at first only occasionally) among the venues for the Alpine Skiing World Cup. Sestriere was no longer just a ski resort. With the increasing number of vacation homes (owned for the most part by people from Torino) and ambitious real estate projects, it took shape as a seasonal village.
- 12 From the standpoint of territorial relationships, the resort's development was still heavily dependent on Torino and the latter city's fortunes, both because the ski slopes (the major force behind the resort's growth) were operated by the *Società Anonima esercizi del Sestriere* (Sestriere Spa from 1984 onwards), a company wholly owned by FIAT and thus by the Agnelli family, and because even though Sestriere attempted to attract international custom, the tourists who patronized it still came mainly from Torino and the region, and only to a lesser extent from other parts of Italy.
- 13 There can be no doubt that winter tourism in the valleys above Torino did not become a mass phenomenon in Sestriere alone: other sites such as Sportinia (Sauze d'Oulx), Cesana, Claviere, Sansicario and Bardonecchia all experienced dynamic growth in this period, though they followed highly dissimilar models (Emanuel, 1994): from the skiing-only resorts such as San Sicario, to medium-sized Alpine cities offering a range of attractions (Bardonecchia), and to the municipalities located midway down the valleys, now fallen

victim to creeping marginalization and population drain. Nevertheless, the relationships between these resorts and towns was still one of competitive coexistence: each ski area was managed independently by various cablecar and lift operators and there were no particular attempts at territorial development: the market was big enough to enable all of these areas to grow.

The rise to international prominence and the discovery of the territory (1985-1999)

- 14 A long period of stagnation in winter tourism began in the mid-Eighties (Batzing, 2007). In marked contrast with many other tourist areas, Sestriere entered a period of prominence on the international level, and took advantage of this opportunity to rethink its development strategy, starting from new synergies and territorial relationships. Sestriere built on its long-standing strengths in winter tourism through a process of territorial integration that between 1984 and 1991 saw the foundation of the Via Lattea ski area. The latter resulted from a process in which Sestriere Spa acquired the facilities belonging to all of the resorts near Sestriere, connecting them in a single system of ski runs extending for over 400 km³. The operation went well beyond simply linking infrastructures: a new territory was produced that involves all the high valleys and which presents itself to the outside world with its own pronounced identity, a unified marketing approach and an integrated growth strategy. Though it is the result of a private initiative, and one which from the standpoint of territorial changes and their governance was once again an expression of Sestriere's links with Torino and the Agnelli family, the Via Lattea complex nevertheless laid the foundations for broader regional cooperation.
- 15 The Via Lattea ski area's role in tourism is clear from the figures for Italian and foreign visitors. Between 1991 and 2001, tourism in Val di Susa as a whole rose by 95%, going from 803,000 visitors to over 1,560,000. Foreign tourists accounted for 30% of the total in 1991, and over 70% – a 128% increase – in 2001. On the other hand, the ties with the rest of the region and with Torino are still strong: between 70 and 80% of Italian tourists visiting the area are from Piemonte (source: Osservatorio turistico della Regione Piemonte).
- 16 Without doubt, Sestriere is the best-known name in the Via Lattea area: since 1983 it has been a fixture on the World Cup skiing circuit. In 1995, Sestriere hosted the Alpine Skiing world championships, which gave it international visibility and made it possible to make major investments in infrastructures.
- 17 Via Lattea brought about stabilization and, at times, demographic expansion for Sestriere and the other surrounding municipalities involved to a greater or lesser extent in the new ski area: a sharp contrast with the decrease in population affecting most Alpine valleys in Piemonte. Between 1991 and 2000, population increased in Sestriere (841 inhabitants, + 5%), Oulx (2676, + 21%), Cesana Torinese (956, 3%) and Sauze d'Oulx (987, 4%).

Sestriere in the Torino 2006 Winter Olympics

- 18 The years from 2000 to 2006 were marked by the run-up to the Torino 2006 Winter Olympic Games. The territorial implications of this event have been extensively discussed

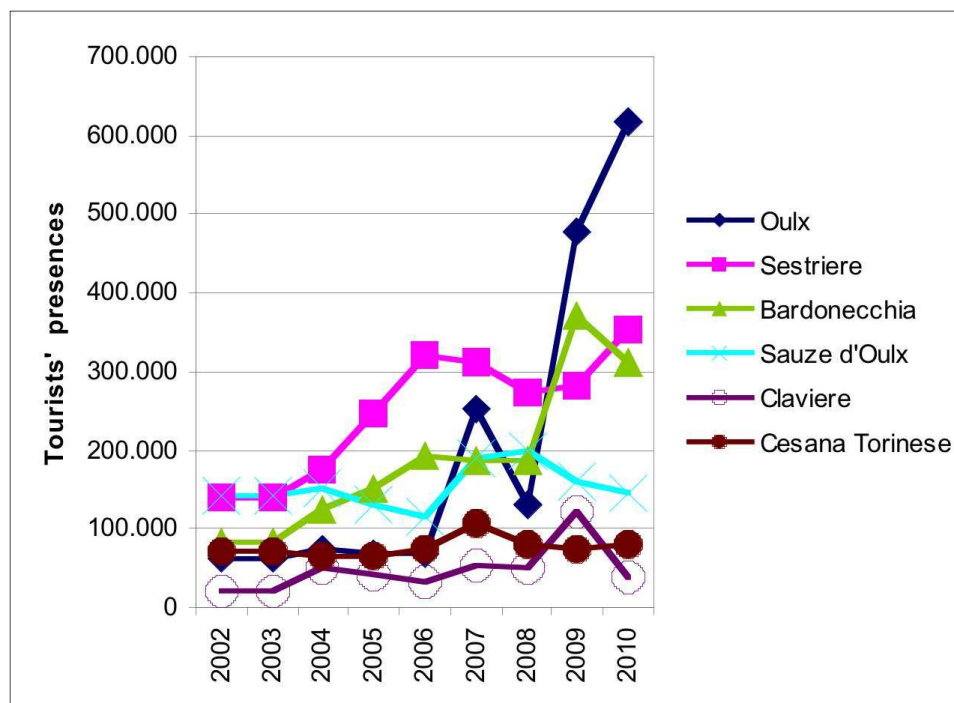
in earlier publications (Dansero, Mela, 2006, 2007; Dansero, Puttilli, 2010; Bondonio, Guala, 2011): for the entire area involved, the Games were a unique opportunity for development both on the tangible level (with urban and infrastructural renewal, new construction and investments in accommodation facilities) and on the intangible level (gaining know-how and skills in management, territorial marketing, and so forth), but also left behind a complex and at times burdensome legacy, especially in the mountains. The risks, well known in the debate on the Olympic legacy, consist of producing an “excess of territorialization” (Turco, 1988), which rather than eliminating earlier territorial shortcomings (in public services, infrastructures, etc.), lays up heavy debts for the future, with a landscape that has been changed almost beyond recognition, if not indeed defaced. It’s the case of certain mountain facilities (like the Cesana bobsleigh track and the Pragelato ski jump) that resulted extremely costly to keep up and (particularly in the case of the former) are subjected to continuous announcements concerning their dismantling and taking out of service⁴. A certain delay in planning for the post-Olympic period and in ensuring that the area is included in the roster of international sports venues has somewhat offset the worldwide media exposure gained from the Games. From the standpoint of accommodation, however, the investments made for the Olympics have bequeathed a major infrastructural endowment to the area which in some cases adds to the existing stock of vacation homes.

- 19 It is however worth noting that the main distinctive features of Torino 2006 can be seen in spatial terms (Dansero, Mela, 2012), with the explicit construction of the hosting territory through the integration of different areas and networks that had never been thought together before. The “Olympic region”, in the strict sense, was a significant portion of the Province of Turin comprised of Bardonecchia to the West, Torre Pellice to the South and Turin to the East. For our purposes here, it should be noted that Torino and Sestriere were the two central poles in the organization of the Olympic games: Torino hosted ice athletes and competitions along with the main Olympic Village, the Media Villages, the Main Press Centre and the International Broadcasting Centre for television and radio services. Sestriere was the main core of the skiing district of the alpine valleys, a functionally separate system where snow athletes, competitions, ceremonies and structures have been hosted. This polarity left other localities in the background, despite the fact that they made important contributions to the Games’ success and received significant investments in infrastructures: towns such as Pragelato, Cesana, and Pinerolo.
- 20 In the relationships between the city and Sestriere, the Olympic event marks a fundamental passage. From the one hand, the resort gradually frees itself from the directing influence of the city. The municipalities in the valleys provide an active interface with the Agencies that organize the Games, both those responsible for constructing new infrastructures (TOROC and Agenzia Torino 2006), and those whose tasks were oriented more towards organization and management (the so-called “Cabina di Regia” in which a number of local administrations participated in orchestrating the event). This bipolarity was also reflected in the two tourist boards – one, “Turismo Torino”, for the metropolitan area and the other, “Montagnedoc”, for the Olympic valleys. Sestriere’s weaning away from Torino also took place through the disengagement of the Agnelli family from Sestriere Spa: in 2006, FIAT sold its holdings to a group of local businessmen⁵. This was an event of enormous importance to the balance of power in the area, as control over all of the Via Lattea ski facilities, and thus of the local economy’s

core business, no longer depended on the corporate strategies of a major industry, but on people from the valleys.

- 21 At the same time, even from the symbolic point of view the mountains were absolutely necessary for the Olympic imaginary, and this strengthened the sense of interdependency with the city. In facts, during the Games, it was widely hoped that a greater integration between the cultural resources of the metropolitan area and the Alpine valleys would be achieved, from the functional standpoint as well as that of tourism: a prospect summed up by the slogan, *Torino, City of the Alps* (Bontempi, 2004).
- 22 As regards the number of visitors, the last decade has been heavily impacted by the Games, both before and after they were held.

Figure 2. Number of tourists in the municipalities in the Via Lattea area and Bardonecchia



Source: Data from the Osservatorio sul Turismo della Regione Piemonte, processed by the authors

- 23 Between 2005 and 2006, Sestriere received a record number of visitors, largely because of the positive influence deriving from the Olympics. The following two years saw a slight drop in tourism, though the influx was still well above that at the beginning of the decade. In the same period, Sestriere, once the most popular tourist destination in the area, lost this distinction to Oulx, which has no skiing facilities of its own but is an important junction that provides access to slopes all over the Via Lattea area.
- 24 From the demographic standpoint as in other respects, the municipalities affected by the Olympics have shown a certain stability. Between 2001 and 2009, the population of Sestriere continued to grow in (889 inhabitants, + 6%), as in the case of Oulx (3209, + 20%), Cesana (1040, +9%), Claviere (212, + 34%) and Sauze d'Oulx (1171, + 19%).

Future prospects: internationalization and differentiation

- 25 Just before the Games, a number of different development scenarios were outlined for the Olympic territory, each hinging on the various actors' ability to enter into relationships with the others and capitalize on the event's legacy (Dansero, Mela, 2007). In one scenario, inertia was expected to result from an inability to cooperate on the part of the actors, who would have continued to follow independent pathways to developing tourism, exposing themselves to the risks attendant on excessive specialization. Other projected scenarios anticipated a more mature situation, in which the Olympic territory would be able to make a name for itself on a variety of tourist markets, from the major international ones to the smaller, regional or local markets involving low-impact forms of tourism oriented towards integrating different activities such as sports, culture, relaxation and so forth.
- 26 Today, similar alternatives also exist for Sestriere and the areas (corresponding roughly to the Via Lattea complex) of which it is the fullest expression. Making reference to the three levels of spatial relations identified above (with surrounding territories, Torino and international relationship), different lines emerge more evidently.
- 27 For what concerns local relationships, Sestriere and Via Lattea are experimenting what Gaido (2002) describes in terms of a transition from a corporate model, where a ski area operator (Sestriere Spa) had a predominate role, to a community model, aiming at territorial governance and integration between different categories of actor and into which different local public and private actors dialogue together in governing the winter station. The major example of this shift is the recent foundation of the *Sestriere e le montagne olimpiche* consortium. This group was set up as a shared means for planning and promoting tourism which goes beyond mere infrastructural integration. Currently, members include several local administrations (Sestriere, Sauze di Cesana, Pragelato, plus a lineup of potential additions), Sestriere Spa and a large number of private groups and individuals (hoteliers, ski schools, craftsmen and so on) who represent the local socio-economic fabric. The consortium operates as a tourist agency and it is administered by a single manager, who promotes tour packages for Sestriere and the other high valleys with international tour operators⁶.
- 28 The transition toward more participative models of governance is also seen as an opportunity to redefine the tourism product. While continuing to focus on winter tourism targeting downhill skiers as the core business, the consortium hopes to establish a wider range of sports-related attractions for the area, entirely free of seasonal dependence (or rather, for all seasons). This is no longer a question of promoting initiatives capable of attracting a few visitors outside of the skiing season or of keeping Sestriere in the public eye as a winter resort even during the summer (e.g., by organizing track and field competitions), as was done in the past, but of becoming a multi-sports center projected towards an array of niche markets. The ambition is to become an integrated mountain resort accommodating competitions as well as amateur tourists in both summer and winter. Eliminating seasonal dependence is also a matter of upgrading existing facilities: soccer fields, tracks, golf courses and adapting ski lifts to summer activities such as mountain biking and grass skiing⁷.

- 29 For what concerns the international relations, Sestriere is assuming a pivotal role in strengthening the ties between the municipalities in the upper Olympic valleys (Val di Susa and Val Chisone), projecting them upon international tourism markets. The main action here is the foundation of the Product Club named Grandi Stazioni Invernali (GSI) within the tourism board *Turismo Torino e Provincia*. The Club has been created to propose actions and projects to promote skiing and winter tourism in the localities of the Via Lattea and Bardonecchia, reinforcing synergies among strategic actors involved in tourism promotion in Piedmont. GSI is formed by the most important higher resorts of Via Lattea (Sestriere above all, Pragelato, Bardonecchia, Sauze d'Oulx and Claviere), Sagat (the group that manages Torino's Airport), SITAF (the group that manages the highway in Val di Susa), Torino's Chamber of Commerce and *Turismo Torino e Provincia*⁸. The Club takes part to the most important international tourism boards and events to promote the Olympic territory as a whole, trying to attract national and international events both in winter and in summer.
- 30 For the purpose of this contribution, it is worth noting that GSI initiative born with the explicit intent to re-equilibrate the relationship between Torino and the valley, with the first considered as the only "winner" of the Games. In facts, after the Olympics, the impression is that this link between the mountains and Torino has not been strengthened, but that they have taken pathways that, if not entirely independent, have at least been very loosely connected. A signal to this effect has come from the criticisms leveled by several interviewees about the unification of the two tourist boards, Montagne Doc and *Turismo Torino*, in a single promotional agency (*Turismo Torino e Provincia*), which is viewed as skewed in favor of the city and as penalizing the mountain areas. In the opinions of Alpine stakeholders, gathered during a campaign of qualitative interviews conducted after the end of the Games (Dansero, Mela, 2007b), there emerged a strong conviction that the central focus on Turin during the Olympics largely obscured the image of the mountains, which were present only as a generic and unspecified "backdrop" to the city. This contributed to heavily limiting the possible positive visibility impact received by the entire area before and during the Olympics and, indirectly and after the Games, furthered the already long consolidated tourism pigeonhole, based totally on characterisation of a few resorts for "skiing holiday" demand, and on development of the property sector for the construction of buildings destined as second homes for inhabitants of the metropolitan area (Dansero, Mela, 2012). As a consequence, initiatives like GSI are seen by the same local stakeholders as a crucial strategy for the mountains to regain a role within the regional tourism market and to present themselves as an international network of excellences.
- 31 Finally, also the relationship with the middle and lower Alpine valleys still remains highly complex: these are areas midway between the tourist beacons of the Alps and the city of Torino, endowed with a noteworthy cultural heritage but which cannot aim for a core business depending in winter tourism, skiing, snowboarding and the like. Although several ideas have been aired in the recent past for promoting greater territorial synergy (Dansero, Puttilli, 2010)⁹, current trends point to a marked loss of cohesion: the high valleys, Torino and the middle valleys appear to represent tourism product of their own, with little ability to share in planning and no integrated development strategy.

Conclusions. Towards a territorial tourism district?

- 32 At its origin, Sestriere embodies the archetype of the winter station (somehow anticipating a model that began to be widely diffused thirty years later) and it may be read as a punctual action promoted by Agnelli's family to provide opportunity for winter recreation and leisure outside Torino's urban confines, in a strict Fordist and functional conception of spatial organization. It would, however, be reductive to interpret Sestriere's history only in this light. Sestriere experimented, in its almost 80s years of life, a complex evolution that couldn't be correctly expressed looking just at its relationship with the city. It has gone through all the stages of Alpine tourism, gradually freeing itself from total dependence on Torino and moving to the center of a highly differentiated territorial system, capable of planning its own development and its own future independently.
- 33 In this paper, we have read these complex transformations through the analysis of Sestriere's spatial relations at different scales: at the local scale of surrounding territories; at the supra-local scale of its relationship with Torino and, finally, at the scale of its international relations. The intent was, first, to empirically test a *relational* approach, giving attention to how a winter station (and Sestriere in our case) is networked and anchored to multiple systems of relations with other territories; second, to show that this "variable-geometry" territorial model represents a crucial resource for the winter station in response to the crisis of the model on which it is based: the resort on its own is excessively exposed to the crisis, but by activating its systems of relations it may become more capable of specializing and, at the same time, differentiating what it has to offer, being able to respond more effectively and more flexibly to external pressures, market demand and international competition.
- 34 Without any doubt, the major event that affected the recent history of Sestriere is represented by the Olympic Games, that left on the ground a legacy that, six years after, may be partially evaluated. On the one hand, the tentative to strengthen synergies between Torino and its valleys may be considered as failed. After the Games, no other initiatives nor events tried to promote the Olympic territory as a whole and the city and the mountains seem to have taken different paths (partly in competition one with the others). On the other hand, we have to recognize that one of the major positive legacies of the Games, from the immaterial point of view, is a greater capacity to work together within and between the valleys and the more touristic municipalities. Initiatives like *Sestriere e le montagne olimpiche* consortium and GSI Product Club testify the capability to go beyond the interdependency with Turin, trying directly to access and interact with international tourism markets and events. An example of this crucial change is the fact that no projects or activities are promoted and realized by Sestriere (or some other locality) on its own, but every initiative is realized as an integrated territorial system (or district).
- 35 In conclusion, making reference again to Gaido (2002) distinction, Sestriere and surrounding territories are experimenting a transition from a corporate model to a community model, aiming at territorial governance and integration between different categories of actors. The latter model, though slower to respond to the market, nevertheless has the planning capacity needed to deal more effectively with the complexity of today's tourist markets. In other words, from being a single-function ski

resort, Sestriere has moved more or less consciously towards a territorial tourism district model that, at regional as well as macro-regional level (the Alps), is indeed a focal point. It is a district that sees its future as going beyond the kind of winter tourism that relies on snow sports, emphasizing, on the one hand, territorial differentiation (or in other words, the different attractions that each locality in the area can offer) and, on the other, specialization in sports. The choice of this specialization is significant inasmuch as it is not only in line with what has long been the area's vocation, but also builds on it by broadening its potential in terms of attracting tourists.

- 36 However, the difficulties of an approach of this kind must not be ignored: constructing territorial relationships always entails a process of inclusion and exclusion (as in the case of the middle valleys) and invariably lays itself open to possible failures of the networks that are thus set up.

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NOTES

1. Local interviews have been submitted to the present and past majors of Sestriere, to the head of the tourism board of Torino and its province, to the manager of Sestriere Spa and to a panel of local hotel owners in Sestriere.
2. Sestriere's foundation came around a decade after the famous FIAT Lingotto plant in Torino started production (1923). This bears witness to a synergy and a direct connection between the two Fordist conceptions of industrial production on the one hand and of leisure time on the other, as an organization of space serving this separation of work and recreation.
3. Other major ski complexes in the Alps include Breuil-Cervinia (380 km of runs), Val d'Isère (300 km), St. Moritz (350 km), Davos (300 km), Kitzbuehel (168 km), Courmayeur (100 km), Val Tellina (170 km), Asiago (95 km), Val Gardena (175 km) and Tre Valli (100 km).
4. In July 2011, Italian Parliament unlocked 40 millions euros of residual funds from Torino 2006 Winter Games' balance, to cover management costs of Olympic facilities in Torino and in the mountains. However, delays in distributing funds on the territory and the increasingly high management costs have recently led on several occasions Parcolimpico Srl, the subject charged for the management of Olympic facilities, to ask for the decommissioning of the bobsleigh track at Cesana (*La Stampa*, 17/09/2011, "La politica perde tempo. A fine mese sbaracchiamo il bob", Alessandro Mondo, p. 54).
5. The purchase of Fiat's shareholdings (worth over 25 millions euros) was concluded by two companies: Publigest spa, an outdoor advertising agency that does business in the Val di Susa and acquired 65% of the stock, and Cba srl, which is owned by a hotelier in the Val di Susa. Fiat's withdrawal, on the other hand, was explained by several interviewees who worked at Sestriere Spa before the transfer of ownership and were thus privy to the circumstances behind the deal, as motivated by the company's desire to concentrate exclusively on the automotive business.
6. The consortium permitted to candidate Sestriere and Via Lattea to host international events such as the World Master Orienteering Championships in the summer of 2013, where more than 30.000 presences (athletes, sponsors, spectators, etc.) are expected between 2 and 11 of August.
7. The most significant project in this field is "Alpi Bike Resort" that integrates eight municipalities in the Olympic valleys in a unique complex of tracks and facilities for mountain bikers. The idea is to replicate during summer time the same model of Via Lattea for skiers.
8. Every public and private member supports the Club with a quota of 10,000 euros for years.
9. At the moment, the project "Noi nelle Alpi" tries to engage local public and private actors (such as association, local municipalities, local NGOs) with the aim to focus on the main weaknesses of the middle valleys and to promote solutions based on a "slow tourism" philosophy.

RÉSUMÉS

In 2006, Sestriere played a leading role in the organization of the Torino Winter Olympic Games. The event was crucial to rethinking the city's development model, which, since its foundation in 1934, hinged on two specific vocations: winter sports tourism and the close link with Torino, where the Agnelli family, the major force behind Sestriere's foundation, had operated the FIAT auto factories since the Twenties. Because of these characteristics, Sestriere has long been an archetypal model of a ski resort, though it has received surprisingly little attention in the literature. In view of the deep-seated crisis that has made it necessary to move away from the traditional ski resort model, the paper uses a territorial perspective to investigate how Sestriere has evolved in response to the major periods of change in Alpine tourism. Our hypothesis is that the resort is at the center of a dense network of multi-scalar territorial relationships (with the city, with the surrounding towns, and with the major international flows), which at the same time provide a means of interpreting and analyzing the resort's territoriality and a fundamental resource to be leveraged in rejuvenating its development models.

INDEX

Keywords : Sestriere, ski resort, Olympic Games, territorial relations

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